



March 2002

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David White, Editor
Jade Chapek, Editor

ITSC News

IHS Information Technology Support Center

ITSC Technology Conference July 9-11!

The ITSC Technology Conference will take place July 9th through 11th once again in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This year's conference will be held at the Albuquerque Marriott Hotel. This year's conference theme is "Technology Transitions: Information Technology Supporting a Changing Indian Health System."

During this event, interested people from all areas of Indian Country gather to share knowledge, ideas, and experience with new technology. The conference is being attended by IHS, tribal, and urban employees and leaders as well as BIA, VA, State, and other Federal agencies. Tuesday afternoon and all day Wednesday and Thursday technical and health-oriented vendors are available with product information and demonstrations.

Workshops and presentations throughout the week promise to peak your interest in technologies currently in deployment throughout IHS, new programs under evaluation, and the effects of various legislation. Topics this year include: Technology Trends, Information Technology Security, Patient Care, Business, and National Indian Health Data Warehouse.

Scheduled presentations will address various RPMS packages, including descriptions of new and recent releases, application of selected packages in the business or clinical environment, and tips for advanced or power users of selected packages. The schedule also includes special meetings throughout the week for specific working groups and project teams.

The Albuquerque Marriott Hotel has set aside a block of rooms for the dates of July 8 - 12, 2002 at the group rate of \$65.00 per night.

Reservations can be made for any day between July 8th and July 12th and must be made prior to July 5, 2002.

Visit the ITSC website at:

http://www.ihs.gov/CIO/InfoTech_index.asp

for specific conference and registration information as well as the latest information on events and presentations.

IHS Web Developers To Launch Community Website

By Joy Holman

The IHS Web Team members at Headquarters East have created a website specifically for personnel in HQE who are responsible for creating and maintaining a website on the IHS Internet or the IHS Intranet. The IHS Web Developer Community website brings together, in one central location, procedures, guidelines and policies for establishing an IHS website. Those who want to establish a site will find an explanation of the information to submit when requesting a site as well as an overview of the many aspects of web site creation.

Those who are already working on a website with a web team member can get up-to-date information on IHS policies and procedures. This includes resources for understanding and implementing website accessibility for physically disabled viewers. Tools tailored to developers' and content providers' needs, such as custom tutorials, checklists, testing tools and references for both general and IHS-specific web development tasks are slated to be added.

Tutorials in the use of the recently implemented IHS web templates are currently available on the site.

An important component of the Developer Community website is the active participation of the department developers and content providers. A ListServ has been set up for easily communicating information and questions among developers and the web team members. A Community section is also planned for the website.

The community of HQE developers and content providers will soon be gathering to build the Community section and will be requesting additional features and content. The IHS Web Developer Community Website Launch Party is scheduled to be held at the Reyes Building in Rockville, MD on March 20th. Len Thurman, supervisor of the IHS Web Team, will be at the event, welcoming the more than forty department developers currently working at HQE. In addition to reviewing the site, the HQE web team members,

Irene Tonson, Ed Conley, Dan Blackbird, and Joy Holman will conduct several mini presentations on web development. Topics include Creating Content for Internet Display, Converting a WebSite to an IHS Template, and Implementing Section 508 Accessibility. Hands-on workshops of these and other related topics are planned for the upcoming months.

In the continuing effort to provide current and substantial information to IHS employees and the public, the HQE Web Team members look forward to this opportunity to increase productivity and enhance the enjoyable interaction among the web team, web developers, and content providers. Visit the IHS Web Developer Community at:

<http://www.ihs.gov/GeneralWeb/HelpCenter/DevComm/>

You can also access the site from the "Current IHS News" scrolling marquee on the IHS Internet homepage at:

<http://www.ihs.gov>

Telecommunications Team News

Systems and Network Update

By Thomas Fisher

As reported last quarter, the first step in the security technology upgrade to the wide area network is complete. We have installed firewalls (PIX 515) and made them operational at all Area offices and the main Internet access point (PIX 525) in Albuquerque. Additional firewalls have been ordered for three other sites (Tucson, HQE, and ABQ Area) and will be shipped soon.

The Polycom video units have been successfully installed in a number of Area offices and ITSC. The ITSC has an 18-port bridge for multi-point video calls (Video of IP – H.323) as well as ISDN (H.323) dial-in

connections. One of the issues we have encountered with the bridge is packet collisions. After a considerable amount of network tuning in the ITSC building, the packet collisions have been eliminated. Other issues for the WAN portion include loading of the Area T1 lines. This loading will be eliminated by implementing Quality of Service (QOS) on the backbone.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we were in the process of configuring a new backbone network design by Qwest with Internet access located at each Area. After a couple of false starts, we are almost there.

We have been using VPN access to the IHS network from non-IHS locations with great success. We will be testing site-to-site VPN within the next two weeks, so we should be able to make that feature available soon.

We have received the servers that will be used to support the implementation of Windows 2000 Active Directory and will determine how to integrate this throughout IHS. We will be looking for assistance from Area technical people as we develop this configuration.

Business Team News

Business Team Offers Workflow Seminar

By Carol Miller

The business office presented a new seminar, entitled “How to Evaluate and Change the Business Process” in Albuquerque, New Mexico on March 6th and 7th. The day-long seminar was presented on two separate days. Presenters Sandra Lahi, Carol Miller, and Art Gonzales provided an overview of new ITSC applications and technology that can improve and assist the workflow process. This broad-based seminar taught attendees how to evaluate and improve the workflow process and consider new applications and technology.

The seminar provided Area office and key Service Unit staff with a detailed understanding of what is included in a two-day workflow assessment, including an implementation team process, tour, interview of staff, workflow diagrams, and examples of workflow change processes.

Attendees also discussed the process of implementing changes team-wide and examined suggestions and examples for realigning workflow through communication, motivation, training, recognition, taking small steps forward, and other tools.

In addition, this seminar provided information about developing and measuring metrics and outcomes as well as presented a brief overview of the return on investment and value of investment concepts.

The seminar also provided attendees with the steps for considering the workflow in their own facility or clinic.

This seminar will be offered again in May in Albuquerque. For more information contact Sandra Lahi at (505) 248-4206 or Carol Miller at (703) 610-2458.



PCC+ Version 1.1 Implementation Continues; 1.2 in Beta Test Phase

by Theresa Cullens, M.D.

ITSC has continued its implementation of the PCC+ Customizable Encounter Form application. It was certified and released in July 2001. By the end of February, ITSC had provided orientation sessions onsite to the eleven Areas requesting them. The orientation provided an opportunity for multidisciplinary teams (providers, IT, business office, medical records, and data entry staff) from interested sites to hear detailed technical and user information about PCC+ before making a financial and resource investment in the application. Training sessions on form design and user preferences were also provided to the Navajo, Oklahoma, Phoenix, and Portland Areas during orientation.

PCC+ provides an interface between a facility's RPMS data and MS Word mail merge files to create real time forms that can be customized by patient, provider, and/or clinic type. Most sites use PCC+ to create a two-page form that combines elements of the health summary, PCC encounter form, and superbill. The form is created and printed with patient- and provider-specific data at the time of the patient visit.

Because using a new combined PCC/health summary/superbill form changes so many aspects of a clinic's

workflow process, a significant part of the day-long orientation session was spent discussing the importance of identifying and evaluating a site's existing process and planning ahead for needed changes.

Additionally, ITSC had provided all Areas the opportunity to send Area and site staff to a series of four PCC+ classes on March 5-8. Classes included Technical Training for Site Managers and IT Staff, PCC+ Form Design (Word), Setting User Preferences for PCC+ Form Customization, and How to Assess and Change Your Workflow Process.

These classes will be offered periodically as users request them. The Navajo Area PCC+ Implementation Team will also offer specialized training classes to its own sites.

Several sites have conducted internal site surveys and contacted ITSC to perform onsite visits to prepare for PCC+ implementation. The pre-implementation visit includes a detailed assessment by the ITSC team of all related workflow processes, including the clinic, registration, coding, and billing. A written report provides the site with findings and recommendations.

ITSC released two PCC+ templates in December: Ambulatory and

Women's Health. These templates have been reviewed and approved by discipline-specific workgroups. Several other templates, including diabetic podiatry, elder care, physical exam, and pharmacy, have been developed and are under review by their respective workgroups. Approved templates are available for download on the PCC+ web site.

Beta testing of version 1.2 began at six sites in late January and was ongoing at the time of newsletter publication. Key features of the new version include:

- Integration with the Scheduling package
- Menu driven management tools
- A new template validation utility. This tool is used prior to deploying a new form and will indicate if a merge field has been omitted, duplicated, or transposed.

Information about site implementation status, checklists and implementation planning tools, system requirements, and other documents that will assist users in planning for and implementing PCC+ can be found on the PCC+ web site at:

<http://www.ihs.gov/CIO/pccplus>

FY 2002 Certified RPMS Package Releases

BXP V 1.0

The Area Data Consolidation Export System (BXP) is a UNIX-based system for transmitting IHS facility patient data from IHS Area offices to the National Patient Information Reporting System (NPIRS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. BXP was designed to consolidate facility patient data, validate record lengths, and provide accurate counts on the number of records transmitted over the IHS WAN/LAN network to NPIRS. The BXP User Interface simplifies system file management by providing an easy process for backing up, restoring, reprocessing, recreating, purging, and archiving patient data files sent to NPIRS.

BPC V 1.2

The IHS Patient Chart program is a Windows-based GUI (Graphical User Interface) application that allows a provider to review and, in some cases, add or edit patient data in the RPMS application suite.

The application uses Client/Server Technology (CST) to obtain patient data from the RPMS server. In CST, the user presentation is removed from the server and put on a client workstation (e.g., your desktop pc). The server handles requests through an interface, processes requests, and returns data to the client.

CHS V 3.1

The Contract Health Services Management Information System (CHS/MIS) provides an effective and reliable means by which eligibility for paid health care is determined. Contract Health System (CHS) tracks, stores, and reports clinical and cost data on patient referrals to in-house clinics, other IHS facilities, and contract health providers.

Version 3.1 contains an updated version of the Denial functions, including expanded features to address Deferral cases. Version 3.1 also includes more informative error messages, improved HFS search, additional fields on the Universal P.O., and updated EOBR processing.

ACR (ARMS) V 2.1

The Administrative Resource Management System (ARMS) is a financial and resource management system. This application enables users to produce and electronically track purchase requests, purchase orders, travel orders, travel vouchers, and training requests.

Version 2.1 for ARMS contains nineteen fixes and modifications bringing the package into compliance with SAC standards for certification as a Class I software application.

RPMS GUI Released

By Linza Bethea

ITSC released a graphical user interface (GUI) for RPMS clinical applications in December 2001. The Patient Chart GUI is intended to be the first component of an integrated, user-friendly, Windows-based applications interface for use by a broad range of users. The current GUI allows the user to see data that reflects the current clinical applications running at a specific site (e.g., Lab package, Women's Health, RCIS, etc.).

Providing a GUI for I/T/U sites hopes to address several issues. Provider order entry at point of care is a key initiative throughout the healthcare community, particularly as a partial solution to the issue of medication errors. For I/T/U sites with high provider turnover, providing a more insightful interface to RPMS will allow new providers to use RPMS more efficiently and effectively.

see GUI, continued on page 8

RPMS Upgrades to Caché

By Gary Shumway

On September 30, 2001, Intersystems announced their retirement of the MSM (MUMPS) technology in favor of their Caché product. They will not release new versions of MSM and will not support MSM running on new hardware architectures or operating system releases. They will continue to sell and support MSM on all currently supported platforms and to fix critical problems that are found, but they are now concentrating on Caché. Caché has evolved into a post-relational, multi-dimensional database with client server and web-based applications development, deployment, and reporting technologies.

In FY00, the Veterans Administration (VA) chose Caché to replace their Digital Standard MUMPS (DSM) database applications, which is also being phased out by Intersystems. This decision is important for IHS because RPMS, FileMan, and the Kernel are derived from VA development.

After reviewing the options available, ITSC decided that Caché offers the easiest upgrade, leverages existing software, and has the greatest growth potential with the least expenditure of funds for research, development, and support. IHS began the upgrade to Caché in FY01, anticipating that all participating IHS Areas and Sites should be upgraded by early 2004.

Once the upgrade is complete, ITSC expects to modify existing RPMS applications to include more and improved features, options, and have a more 'windows like' user interface. In fact, software to bring this to fruition is currently being evaluated.

How Does Upgrading Benefit IHS?

Moving to Caché has many positive benefits, including a widely used programming environment and database system, greater access to trained programmers, modern operating and hardware systems support, increased processing speeds, and minimal licensing costs.

Caché is used by some of the largest medical and well known financial companies, e.g., Brigham and Women's Hospital and Ameritrade. It is also used in many of the VA sites, enabling IHS to leverage off the VA development efforts.

Caché is built around the Object Oriented paradigm and supports native ODBC and SQL. It runs on AIX, Windows NT/2000 (among other operating systems), and Linux. Unlike MSM, Caché can take advantage of multiple processors. It also has GUI-based Systems Management on Windows NT/2000.

Programmers and site managers coming from a MSM environment will have much less difficulty learning Caché than learning a totally new database platform.

Progress with RPMS Packages

RPMS developers in ITSC have undergone training and have access to a Caché environment in which to run their packages. A preliminary compile of all the RPMS package routines has served to focus their development and debugging efforts. The immunization package has been modified to function under Caché and is undergoing testing. Potential alpha sites are being considered. Some 95% of the XB/ZIB utilities and %ZISH have already been modified for use under Caché. The Caché project has spurred installation and testing of the newest releases of FileMan, Kernel, HL-7, and related software and has magnified the need for a clean install version of RPMS. ITSC will notify ISCs regarding availability of the upgrades to FileMan/Kernel and related software necessary to support the use of RPMS running under Caché.

Visit the Caché intranet website at:

<http://home.ihs.gov/itsc-cio/cache/>

for additional information on the project, including progress reports, implementation concerns, web pages for Site Managers and Developers, project contacts, links to Intersystems, and downloads. The site also contains a draft of the hardware and operating systems for three differently sized sites.

Kudos to the NPIRS Staff!

By Joan Christy

The National Patient Information Reporting System (NPIRS) staff were recently given a celebration luncheon, complete with awards, both formal and serious, and some along a more humorous vein. The event was in recognition of the achievements over the past year by the NPIRS staff toward improving data quality and bringing fiscal reporting up to a current status.

Last year at about this time, NPIRS was generating reports from FY98 data; in January of this year, they produced FY01 workload and user population reports. In the interim the staff worked with the Data Quality Action Team and Area Statistical Officers to research and resolve data issues which has led to significantly more accurate reporting.

The year has been a trying one for this team of people. The group experienced significant staffing and organizational changes. They underwent a

change in contracting firms. They were called upon to respond to a markedly increased demand for their services from across IHS. Yet at the same time, they pulled together as a team and proved to be instrumental in the continuous improvement in the



Seated from L to R: Sue Ehrhart, Louise Cowboy, Cherie Thomas, Beth Marcum; Standing from L to R: Joe Solomon, Ryan DeLuche, Anthony Rivera, Mike Carver, Ken Russell, Juan Trujillo, Sam Berry, Melvin Anzara, Paul Golis, Yolinda Cadman, Mike Bryant, Joe Herrera; Not Pictured: Dyron Thompson, Lisa Petrakos, Ron Longo

data and its processing and reporting. They also effectively supported the decision-making process of the Statistical Officers and data owners by researching into the data and providing additional reports to help them thoroughly understand the

issues and potential impact of available solutions.

In a letter from the Statistics Program, Office of Program Support, data owners Edna Paisano and Linda Querec told the NPIRS staff that their "...entire effort has brought integrity and confidence to the

IHS patient care database. Senior management and Area Directors have expressed their appreciation and recognition of a job well done by the NPIRS Team. Your (NPIRS) efforts have made a tremendous difference to this agency and to the reputation of ITSC."

These comments were echoed by Team Leader Ken Russell: "The FY2001 User Pop and

workload reporting projects were quite an accomplishment. I am honored to be part of such a talented group of professionals. Thank you for all your hard work and effort!"

Congratulations, NPIRS staff, for a job well done!

RPMS GUI Released

continued from Page 5

The current version of the Patient Chart interface is primarily patient-centric and is intended to assist providers with the following:

- Reviewing patient information prior to or during patient visits
- Ordering laboratory tests, medications and referrals
- Directly entering and editing certain types of patient data.

An enhanced version of Patient Chart is expected to be released in late spring 2002; planned additions to functionality include: provider order entry of medications, immunization and skin test order entry, education protocols, and updated RCIS.

A one-day training class has been developed for IT and provider staff that is available periodically in Albuquerque and other locations. The class covers technical topics, such as installing server and client software and assigning security keys; hands on instruction in using all the order entry and edit functions; and discussions about potential workflow changes needed to successfully implement provider order entry.

More information is located at: www.ihs.gov/CIO/GUI

RPMS Support Center Statistics

The RPMS Support Center closed 626 support calls from October 11, 2001 through January 31st of this year. Here's a breakdown of closed orders:

1. Open 0-7 Days: 427
2. Open 8-14 Days: 26
3. Open 15-21 Days: 22
4. Open over 22 Days: 151

You can contact the RPMS Support Center by:

Phone:

888-830-7280

505-248-4371

Email:

RPMSHelp@mail.ihs.gov

Web:

www.rpms.ihs.gov/TechSupp.asp

Training News

Time To Renew HHS DL/Net Learning Portal Subscriptions

By David White

The ITSC is currently in the process of renewing user subscriptions to the Department of Health and Human Service's Distance Learning Portal. If you currently hold a subscription to the Learning Portal, you should have been contacted via e-mail asking if you'd like to continue your subscription for another year.

The DL/Net Learning Portal is a web-based training tool offering more than 150 technical and non-technical training courses to subscribers. The courses are offered by NETg and SkillSoft. Technical course topics range from software programming to Microsoft Office and other business software applications. Non-technical training offerings include team building, management, and personal development courses. Nearly 350 subscriptions were

purchased by ITSC for distribution to IT professionals. Last year more than 270 people signed up for subscriptions. Unfortunately, only about half of those enrolled actually took a course.

Keep in mind the Learning Portal can be accessed from home as well. Home access procedures to the site are no different than accessing from work.

If you don't have a subscription and would like one, want to check on the status of your current subscription, or have not been contacted and would like to continue your subscription, feel free to contact me at (505) 248-4268. I can also be reached at david.white@mail.ihs.gov. Remember - this educational opportunity is available at no cost to you – take advantage today!

RPMS Training Schedule

April

Aberdeen Area

4/22-26: Mental Health

California Area

4/10-11: Scheduling

CRIHB

4/23-24: Patient Scheduling V5.0

4/25: Patient Registration V6.0

Nashville Area

4/15-16: Women's Health

NW Portland Area IHB

4/17-18: Community Health
Representative (CHR)

Phoenix Area

4/2-3: Patient Registration V6.0

4/9-10: Referred Care Information
System (RCIS) V2.0

4/16-17: Chemical Dependency
Management Information
System (CDMIS) V4.1

4/30-5/1: Maintaining Your Lab
Package

May

Aberdeen Area

5/20-24: Women's Health

Bemidji Area

5/29-30: Scheduling

CRIHB

5/15-16: Patient Care Component
V4.0

5/22: Immunization V7.0

Nashville Area

5/14-16: Third Party Billing/
Accounts Receivable

5/15-16: Patient Registration

NW Portland Area IHB

5/14-16: Diabetes Management
System

Oklahoma Area

5/7-9: Patient Registration

5/14-15: Scheduling

Phoenix Area

5/7-8: Data Quality Improvement

5/13-17: PCC Data Entry I and II
V2.0

Portland Area

5/29-30: Women's Health

June

Aberdeen Area

6/3-7: Third Party Billing/Accounts
Receivable

Billings Area

6/25-26 : Scheduling

California Area

6/12-13: Women's Health

CRIHB

6/5-6: Dental (DDS) V6.0

6/19-20: Public Health Nurse (PHN)
V4.0

6/25-26: Referred Care Information
System (RCIS) V1.0

6/27-28: Contract Health
Management System V3.0

NW Portland Area IHB

6/10-14: Third Party Billing/
Accounts Receivable

Phoenix Area

6/4-5: Chemical Dependency
Management Information
System (CDMIS) V4.1

6/11-12: Mental Health/Social
Services V2.0 (Tentative)

6/19-21: Basic/Intermediate FileMan

6/24-26: MSM Error Trapping/
Debugging

Portland Area

6/4: Women's Health

6/10: Third Party Billing/Accounts
Receivable

Don't See What You're Looking For?

If you have any questions about training or wish to request a training session for your Area, please contact Larry Saavedra, the training coordinator, by:

Phone: (505) 248-4214

Email: larry.saavedra@mail.ihs.gov

Web: <http://www.ihs.gov/Cio/RPMS/TrainSched.asp>

Self-Governance News

Springtime is Negotiations Time

By Rich Luarkie

It seems like only yesterday we began preparations for the FY2002 negotiations. The FY2003 negotiations are now just around the corner and will begin in May. The Self-Determination Services Team, has been working with Area Lead Negotiators to prepare for negotiations by providing supporting documentation that will aid in their understanding of the Information Technology components that tribes are interested in assuming responsibility of. Another part of this assistance has been to obtain the worksheets used to calculate share amounts and place on the internet so ALNs & tribes can conveniently access the worksheets. These worksheets can be viewed on the IHS web site at:

<http://www.ihs.gov/CIO/Self-Determin/>

USAC Update

Aberdeen 468 forms have been completed by MCI and the 466 forms are in the process of being completed. The Crow Agency Hospital under the Billings Area is one of the locations that has received a year 4 reimbursement amount so far. So as we move ahead with this program, we are starting to see the reimbursements trickle in. Updates will be given as 466/468's are completed, submitted and as reimbursements roll in.

Spring IHS/BIA Joint Self-Governance Conference

This years spring SG conference will be held in Albuquerque. This conference is an opportunity to showcase the different initiatives the programs are pursuing and the collective effort of the various SG organizations.

Also at this conference:

- Overview of P.L. 96-638 for new tribes
- Update on Legislative changes related to P.L. 96-638
- Many negotiations are kicked off for participants
- Negotiation schedule is made available
- ALN sessions

Contributors

Thomas Fisher

*Telecommunications and
Computer Systems Managment*
(505) 248-4219
tom.fisher@mail.ihs.gov

Rich Luarkie

Self-Determination Services
(505) 248-4468
richard.luarkie@mail.ihs.gov

Joy Holman

Web Team
(301) 443-2616
jholman@hqe.ihs.gov

Theresa Cullen, M.D.

*Senior Medical Informatics
Consultant*
(520) 670-4803
theresa.cullen@mail.ihs.gov

Gary Shumway

Caché Project Manager
(505) 248-8000
gary.shumway@mail.ihs.gov

Joan Christy

User Support, NPIRS
(505) 248-4157
joan.christy@mail.ihs.gov

Lucas Covington

RPMS Help Desk
(505) 248-4224
lucas.covington@mail.ihs.gov

Carol Miller

Business Team
(703) 610-2458
carol.miller@mail.ihs.gov

Linza Bethea

Management Analyst
(520) 670-4872
linza.bethea@mail.ihs.gov

David White

User Support
(505) 342-9953
david.white@mail.ihs.gov